DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 334 544 CS 010 630

AUTHOR Partridge, Susan
TITLE Choral Reading Discussed as an Adjunct to Reading Programs: Primary through Adult.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Students; *Choral Speaking; Class Activities; Elementary Secondary Education; English (Second Language); *Reading Instruction
IDENTIFIERS Reading Uses

ABSTRACT

Choral reading has a place as an adjunct in a total reading program at all levels of education and can serve to help keep alive the enthusiasm and efficiency for learning which children show at home in the first years of life. Many education scholars have noted its usefulness and suggested activities to develop it. Examples of the successful use of choral reading in elementary and secondary clasrooms, as well as with adults in an English-as-a-Second-Language class, demonstrate its advantages as an adjunct to reading programs. Choral reading is enjoyable: it encourages the shy, it promotes alertness, it stimulates thinking, imagination, and creativity, it teaches, it can be used with a wide age range, and it can lead to students' writing of their own selections. (A list of 12 implications of choral reading for educators is attached.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED334544

SUSAN PARTRIDGE

Choral Reading Discussed as an Adjunct to Reading Programs: Primary Through Adult

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS010630

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Susan Partridge

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SUSAN PARTRIDGE

Choral Reading Discussed as an Adjunct to Reading Programs: Primary Through Adult

A recent article, "Commentary: Singing the Praises of Choral Reading," by Robert E. Kay, was a reminder that some successful use of it had been personally witnessed throughout decades of educational work. This paper is addressed to its use as an adjunct and is not in agreement with Kay's statement which reads, "My belief is that choral reading should become the method of choice in school and at home." It is felt that a strong belief in the uniqueness of individuals dictates otherwise.

Kay states the problem as follows:

> Recent concerns include a decline in standardized test scores in the United States over the past 30 years; the National Assessment of Educational Progress observation that a mere 5 percent of those 17-year olds who are still in school can read well enough to learn from literary essays, historical documents, or original scientific contributions; and the allegation that 85 percent of teenagers and 46 percent of adults in the U.S. have never voluntarily read a book.

His aim seems to be to keep alive the enthusiasm and efficiency for learning which children show at home in the first few years of life.

Kay makes some specifics to which he feels the problem can be attributed. He writes:

> Television, cultural deprivation, and alternative pleasures are some well-known explanations of the problem. Also, we must recognize that assignments, book reports, pressure, and testing have made many children fear and dislike reading.
>
> Other problems include trying to teach before the child's brain has developed to the point that

CS010630

learning abstract symbols becomes relatively easy, an obsessive enthusiasm for measurable results that causes us to put anxious children "on the spot" to demonstrate what's been absorbed, and a lack of trust in children's inborn need to learn.

Kay's solution seems to be choral reading. He explains:

> One of the end results is that we have minimized the importance of what appears to be the easiest and most effective way of learning to read -- choral reading (reading in unison). This method is very similar to the neurological impress remedial reading technique as described by R. G. Heckelman in the summer 1966 issue of Academic Therapy Quarterly; his paper includes impressive results.
>
> Many teachers have used books on tape for supplemental learning or have incorporated this model as part of the whole language approach. My belief, however, is that choral reading should become the method of choice both in school and at home.

In support of his belief, Kay quoted John Holt (Learning All the Time, Addison Wesley, 1990): "The child has learned to read simply by seeing words and hearing them at the same time. Nobody taught them to read, and they weren't particularly trying to learn. They weren't listening to the story so that they would be able to read better, but because it was a good story, and they liked sitting on a comfortable grown-up lap and hearing it read aloud."

As to when to start the program which Kay seems to feel should become the method of choice at home and in school, Kay says, "In line with developmental issues, some brains are ready to read quite early; others may not be ready until age 9 or even later. But some reading aloud would still be helpful in the

interim."

It is believed that, in many cases, choral reading hasn't been used very much, if at all. To verify this belief, a number of students -- freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors at a prestigious university were selected at random and asked if they remembered participating in choral reading as they moved through the grades and high school. No one answered in the affirmative. Some requested an explanation of choral reading, and when it was explained gave favorable comments such as "That's neat!" This is, indeed, hard to understand, for decades ago, there were those educators who realized that there was a place for choral reading as an adjunct to the total reading program. An example is offered:

In a book, The Reading of Poetry, copyright 1963, William Sheldon (6), a noted reading specialist, in collaboration with Nellie Lyons and Polly Roualt, offered 347 titles by 357 authors. The offerings follow: Poems for Choral Reading, Sound and Song, Private Worlds, Merry Moments, Let's Look Around, Days and Holidays, In Praise of People, and Animal Poems. Any of these selections from this large offering can be adapted for choral reading for students of different age levels. The authors explain:

> It seems unwise to say that a particular poem is meant only for children. Rather we can say that people appreciate the many aspects of poetry with varying degrees of subtlety and understanding, and that these change as they grow and mature. For example, A.A. Milne's, "If I Were King" has obvious appeal to children, but it can also be very

> precious to the adult, who can sense again, however fleetingly, the feeling that he once had on a rainy afternoon when he was alone with this thoughts. Or perhaps he can have the equally remarkable experience of recalling his childhood perceptions of this very poem. In ensuring children's familiarity with poetry, we are affording them a unique personal experience that they can explore now, and relive and rediscover as they get older.

Since poetry is sound, it follows that it should be heard as well as read. Even the very young can hear rhythm and rhyme though they can't read. Hearing beautiful and humorous selections read to them by caring people is, indeed, a "plus" in the children's favor.

Though the number of teachers taking advantage of the work of Sheldon and others in "promoting" choral reading as an adjunct is small, there were some who did, and who, perhaps, should have made their successes known. Some of the successful uses of choral reading personally witnessed throughout the years follow:

In an English as a Second Language (ESL) class in a technical college, an animated instructor used it as an adjunct. Some of her students were highly intelligent people, well-educated in their homelands but a bit embarrassed about their English pronunciations. This is understandable, for when one has spoken a particular language for years, it takes time to acquire exact pronunciations in a second language. Though some were sensitive about their English pronunciations, they felt free to try choral reading because their "mistakes" did not stand out. Peals of laughter throughout the room seemed to be expressions of joy and satisfaction.

Some of the students who were parents were interested in children's selections as well as in selections appropriate for adults. This is both understandable and commendable because there is considerable evidence to support the fact that children who are read to, read with, and listened to, usually develop a healthy attitude toward reading, do well in it, and thoroughly enjoy it.

Carl B. Smith (7) has called family literacy the most important literacy. He writes, "People form Barbara Bush to the least known teacher in the country have expressed a sense of growing urgency over the need for family literacy. There is a sense that supporting family learning will not only help schools but will also bring greater cohesion to American families." It is felt that choral reading can play a part in achieving these goals.

Another interesting use of choral reading, personally witnessed, and given below, shows still another value of choral reading:

John was a young boy who found paying attention extremely difficult. It is well-know that a number of selections have a word or two, "Ha! Ha!," "Buzz! Buzz!", for example, interspersed throughout. The teacher and the children decided that they would give John the reading of such a part, as he would have to pay attention in order to come in at the right time with the repetitious words. If John hesitated for a second or two, the index finger of his good friend, who sat next to him, found its

way to John's rib, and out came the words. Sometimes, to the joy of the class, they came out with a little stronger expression than they did when he was alert and didn't have to be reminded.

Another case remembered is that of a pleasant and profitable use of choral reading as an adjunct in a remedial language arts program offered in the summer at a prestigious university. The subjects were upper secondary students hoping to improve their reading and writing skills prior to entering college or pursuing a career in which they would need to be proficient in these skills.

The instructor had the students orchestrate some appropriate selections. She admitted that they did a far better job of this than she could have done. The students seemed to enjoy it thoroughly, and the obvious cooperation of all might well have been that the orchestration was done as a cooperative.

The particular examples, offered above, were chosen as representative of a wide age range as well as some of the many advantages of the use of choral reading as an adjunct: It relieves shyness, develops alertness, teaches, encourages creativity, stimulates thinking, affords pleasure and can introduce students, in a pleasant manner, to beautiful and meaningful, long-to-be-remembered selections of poetry.

Sheldon, Lyons, and Roualt offer suggestions as to the reading of particular selections, thus making it possible for interested teachers to add choral reading to their total reading program. A couple of their suggestions follow:

> A family group, several playmates or a small group of children might enjoy interpreting Louis Untermeyer's adaptation of "Ten Brothers" chorally. It is an amusing poem, and its story line makes the sequence easy to remember and follow. It also provides the fun of the sharp contrast between the drastic fate of each successive brother and the carefree, rollicking refrain.
>
> A very direct and uncomplicated selection with an appealing rhythmic pattern is "In the Fashion," by A.A. Milne. Because of the simplicity of its language and the repetitious element of its sequence, it would be appropriate for young children as well as for a group of mixed ages.

Choral reading lends itself to many interpretations; this stimulates thought and imagination and provides further appreciation and enjoyment of the selections read, thus adding to the value of choral reading. Sheldon, Lyons, and Roualt offer several specific interpretations:

> Music is an art form that is frequently compared with poetry, and the two often complement each other. It would be very natural and appropriate to precede or accompany the reading of John Burton Adams' "At a Cowboy Dance" with square dance or cowboy music.
>
> Rhythm activities are also related to poetry. "Grasshopper Hop-o-the Grasses," by Grace Taber Hallock, suggests a staccato jumping rhythm children would probably enjoy responding to with fingers or toes.
>
> Zhenya Gay's large and lumbering elephant would be fun to imitate in a rhythmic pantomime.

In a very recent issue of <u>The Reading Teacher</u>, Janet Millar Grant (1) explained what she called "poetry in motion." Upon returning to the classroom after taking a neighborhood walk with the children to observe leaves, the children made a list of descriptive "leaf words" -- twirling, spinning, diving, dancing,

swooping, gliding and many others. Word pictures were made by combining two of the descriptive words.

After experiencing the word pictures through movement, the children recorded their impressions. Following the written activity, they made leaf prints to accompany their writing and, seemingly, enjoyed using a different medium to express their impressions.

Grant explained: "I found that by including movement exploration in the classroom, the children experienced a more intense emotion and were more focused in resultant activities."

For many, many years, emphasis seems to have been on silent reading. Now, many articles dealing with reading aloud are found in reputable educational journals and in various newspapers, thus reaching more and more people. The articles are concerned with reading aloud in school, at home, as well as in various other places.

An Associated Press article, "Will Mother Goose Vanish Like Bo-Peep's Sheep?", by Kelly P. Kissel (?) was found in The News and Observer, Raleigh, N.C. Kissel quoted Dr. Bette Goldstone, an education professor at Beaver College, as saying, "Mother Goose has a lot of educational value for youngsters, and some teachers are taking advantage of it. You're speaking in their language. That's more relevant for them than Care Bears or Rambo."

Goldstone believes that rhymes mirror children's language patterns. She offered "Hey Diddle Diddle" as a prime example and also mentioned the alliteration of "Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater."

She also spoke of knowledge gained from counting rhymes, alphabet rhymes and months of the year.

Critics of Mother Goose bemoan the violence, alleged sexism, wife abuse, and promiscuity which they feel are found in some of the rhymes. Many teachers disagree with this; they believe that the little children don't think of these things and, furthermore, that they can see much worse on T.V.

It is believed that pure enjoyment and language development on the part of the children far outweigh any so-called risks that might be taken in the case of some children. It is further believed that a sensitive and caring teacher can avoid these risks as she has a lot of rhymes from which to choose.

Parental involvement has always been a concern, but getting the parents whose cooperation is needed the most has been difficult in some cases. Timothy V. Rasinski and Anthony D. Fredericks (4) write about working with parents and beyond parents into the community. They explain: "To be a fully contributing member of the community one needs to be able to read and to use literacy skills in many ways required by the community." They offer suggestions as to how this can be done. Bringing the community into the school is one way. Community members -- firemen, policemen, etc. are invited to speak to the students. Bringing the classroom into the community, though not as easy, is another way which they have found successful. An example follows:

Choral reading, Readers' Theatre, and dramatic

> presentations of familiar stories are done throughout the day. Shopping malls seem to be the "central park" for many communities. Celebrating reading at the mall allows parents and others to see just what students are doing in schools and invites them to become more involved in the literacy eduction taking place in their community.
>
> Taking literacy into the community is a "can't lose" proposition. Students are given real ideas, true inspiration, and an accepting audience for their reading and writing. Community members learn to appreciate the work of students and teachers in their schools. And schools benefit from the positive feelings, respect, and support that community members develop for their schools and from the added commitment that persons in the community will make to literacy education.

"Classroom into the community" -- choral reading "fits this picture" well. All children -- shy children, poor children, handicapped children -- can participate. All parents can feel free to participate too because the mall is "neutral territory"; there need be no embarrassment on the part of parents whose homes don't contain the many conveniences -- even luxuries of the more fortunate, and, certainly, shopping malls don't require stylish dressing.

For those teachers who would undertake choral reading, it is advised that they keep the chief aim in mind, that is, to guide their students toward an aesthetic awareness. Analyzing a beautiful poem too deeply can defeat the purpose. However, the understanding of poetic images such as "The road was a ribbon of moonlight" and "The moon was a ghostly galleon," Alfred Noyes, add to the reader's enjoyment as does the understanding of other poetic devices.

Conclusion

It is concluded that choral reading definitely has a place as an adjunct in a total reading program. It is enjoyable; it encourages the shy; it promotes alertness; it stimulates thinking, imagination and creativity; it teaches; it can be used with a wide age range; and it can lead to students' writing of their own selections.

Implications for Educators

1. Carefully consider including choral reading in your total reading program.
2. Take advantage of the success stories found in reputable educational journals.
3. Share your successes with your colleagues.
4. Respect and provide for individual interests and capabilities.
5. Seek the cooperation of parents.
6. Put forth every effort to make choral reading a pleasurable and memorable experience for all students, not a stressful one.
7. Encourage children's writing of poetry and prose.
8. Encourage imagination and creativity, and stimulate thinking.
9. Include all age levels in choral reading.
10. Encourage its use at home.
11. Make use of the wide variety of selections in order to satisfy the needs and interests of all students.
12. Encourage its use in strengthening family ties.

Bibliography

1. Grant, J.M. "Poetry in Motion." The Reading Teacher, May 1991 (Located in section, "In the Classroom," by French, M.P. and Danielson, K.E.).

2. Kay, R.E. "Commentary: Singing the Praises of Choral Reading." Reading Today, April/May 1991.

3. Kissel, K.P. "Will Mother Goose Vanish Like Bio Beep's Sheep?" The News and Observer, May 1, 1991.

4. Rasinski, T.V. and Fredericks, A.D. "Working with Parents." The Reading Teacher, May 1991.

5. Schneider, S. "Poetry-of-the-month club." The Reading Teacher, May 1991 (See "In the Classroom" section, by French, M.P. and Danielson, K.E.).

6. Sheldon, W. et al. The Reading of Poetry. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1963.

7. Smith, C.B. "Family Literacy: The Most Important Literacy." The Reading Teacher, May 1991.